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Date: August 9, 2010

PUBLIC SCOPING
JUNCTION VEGETATION MANAGEMENT PROJECT
Bend/ Fort Rock Ranger District, Deschutes National Forest
Deschutes County, Oregon

You are invited to review and comment on this proposal. For your comments to be most helpful, please respond by September 10, 2010. We would like to hear from you.

The Forest Service is proposing to manage vegetation within a 17,500-acre planning area about 3 miles west of the community of Sunriver (Figure 1). The project will involve small and medium diameter thinning, shelterwood and seed tree harvest, overstory removal, mowing, and underburning on approximately 16,000 acres to meet resource goals and objectives described in the Deschutes National Forest *Land and Resource Management Plan* (1990) (LRMP) and related documents, including Community Wildfire Protection Plans (CWPPs).

Objectives include maintenance and enhancement of scenic view along major roads as well as on the south side of Pistol Butte; maintenance and enhancement of conditions within the Pistol Butte Old Growth Management Area (OGMA); creating safe travel corridors adjacent to Forest Roads 40, 42, and 45 to provide safe ingress and egress for the public, local residents, and firefighters during wildfire events, and improve stand and individual tree health and vigor to minimize unacceptable impacts to important resources in and adjacent to the project area.

Purpose and Need

The overall objective of this project is to create landscape level vegetative conditions that reflect historic vegetation and disturbance patterns and scales that can be maintained over the long term. This project has a two-fold purpose:

- 1) Maintain and enhance stand resiliency to uncharacteristic disturbance events including insects, disease and wildfire in order to protect values at risk including scenic corridors, critical transportation routes, public safety, Old Growth Management Areas, and unique plant and wildlife habitats.
- 2) Contribute forest products, including commercial and small tree material, to provide job opportunities for local and regional economies.

Management Direction

The following is a summary of the goals and objectives of the Deschutes Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan) for the applicable Management Areas.¹

Management Area	LRMP Goals & Objectives	Existing Condition in Project Area
General Forest	Within the General Forest MA, timber production is to be emphasized while	Approximately 3,540 acres of this allocation are considered unmanaged –

¹ The Forest Plan, as amended, guides all natural resource management activities and provides standards and guidelines for the Deschutes National Forest. The LRMP is available online at <http://www.fs.fed.us/r6/centraloregon/projects/planning/forest-plans/index.shtml>.



(12,267 acres)	providing forage production, visual quality, wildlife habitat, and recreational opportunities for public use and enjoyment. The objective is to continue to convert unmanaged stands to managed stands with the aim of having stands in a variety of age classes with all stands utilizing the site growth potential (Forest Plan, page 4-117).	these stands are overstocked; lodgepole pine-dominated stands are increasingly subject to bark beetle attack. Ponderosa pine are experiencing declining growth rates and increasing levels of stress increasing the risk of bark beetles. Managed stands require maintenance of health and resilience by controlling stocking levels and maintaining site growth potential.
Scenic Views (3,292 acres)	The project area contains a small amount of foreground and middleground scenic views. The goal of scenic views management areas is to provide high quality scenery representing the natural character of central Oregon. Landscapes seen from selected travel routes and use areas are to be managed to maintain or enhance their appearance. To the casual observer, results of activities either will not be evident, or will be visually subordinate to the natural landscape (Forest Plan, page 4-121).	Much of this allocation is currently too dense, making large trees difficult or impossible to see. Stands lack species and size class diversity. Lodgepole pine stands typically lack the full crown. Major routes within this allocation (Roads 40, 42, 45) have also been identified as critical transportation corridors in the Upper Deschutes Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP), so safe ingress and egress for residents, firefighters, and the public is an important consideration.
Intensive Recreation (1,380 acres)	The project area provides recreation opportunities along Fall River. The goal is to provide a wide variety of quality outdoor recreation opportunities within a Forest environment where the localized settings may be modified to accommodate large numbers of visitors. In ponderosa pine, large old trees are desired.	Objectives are similar for Scenic Views. The area currently lacks visual diversity with stands of uniform ages, species compositions, and size classes. Road 42 within this allocation is also designated as a critical transportation corridor in the Upper Deschutes CWPP, so safe ingress and egress for residents, firefighters, and the public is an important consideration.
Old Growth (384 acres)	Old Growth Management areas are intended to provide naturally-evolved old growth forest ecosystems for (1) habitat for plant and animal species associated with old growth forest ecosystems, (2) representations of landscape ecology, (3) public enjoyment of large, old tree environments, and (4) the needs of the public from an aesthetic spiritual sense. They will also contribute to the biodiversity of the Forest (Forest Plan, page 4-149).	Many stands within and adjacent to the OGMA contain high stand densities and multiple canopy layers increasing the risk of either insect attack or severe wildfire that could damage or destroy stands.
Wake Butte Special Interest Area (203 acres)	The goal of special interest areas are to provide interpretation of unique geological, biological, and cultural areas for education, scientific, and enjoyment purposes (Forest Plan page, 4- 90). The objective is to protect their unique character. The Wake Butte SIA is	Stands within the SIA are currently overstocked and characterized by multiple canopy levels. Existing conditions make stands increasingly susceptible to crown fire increasing the risk of a wildfire event that would result in the loss of the unique vegetation that

identified as one in which protecting the vegetation is important (S&G 1-15, Forest Plan, page 4- 91. characterizes the SIA.

Fall River is a candidate for designation as a wild and scenic river. Current management direction is to protect the outstandingly remarkable characteristics of the river corridor. Approximately 29 acres of the planning area are located within corridor boundary, currently described as ¼ mile from the river.

The entire project area lies east of the range of the spotted owl range. It is subject to Regional Forester's Amendment #2, also known as the Eastside Screens. The Eastside Screens amendment was the result of a large-scale planning effort to determine the best approach for maintaining future options concerning wildlife habitat associated with late and old structural stages, fish habitat, and old forest abundance. The Eastside Screens contain guidelines for management of timber sales in late-old structure (LOS) relative to the Historic Range of Variability (HRV), wildlife corridors, snags, coarse woody debris, and goshawk management.

Proposed Action

The proposed action has been developed to meet the purpose and need and is guided by the management direction from the Forest Plan as amended. Figures 2A and 2B display proposed treatment units. Unit specific information is displayed in Table 1. Treatments are proposed for approximately 16,034 acres.

Table 1. Summary of Proposed Action

Objective	Units	Actions	Acres
Fuel Break Treatment associated with safety corridors identified in the Upper Deschutes Community Wildfire Protection Plan	F8, F9, F10	Thin, Pile & Burn Slash, and Mow	1,874
Fuel Reduction: A combination of thinning, mowing, and underburning to reduce fuel loadings and ladder fuels in ponderosa pine stands.	F1-F7	Small/medium Tree Thinning, Piling & Burning Slash, Mowing, Underburn	2,875
Fuel Reduction: Mowing and underburning in managed and unmanaged ponderosa pine stands to restore and maintain desired fuel loadings	F1, F2, F4-F6	Mow, Underburn	2,137
Lodgepole & Ponderosa: In previously harvested stands with a residual seed-tree or shelterwood overstory and a well-established understory is present, an overstory removal harvest would be used to allow for the continued development and management of the understory.	V1	Overwood Removal Harvest, Thin, Pile & Burn Slash	1,484
	V1	Overwood Removal Harvest, Thin, Lop & Scatter Slash	1,978
	V1, V2, F3, F7	Overwood Removal Harvest, Thin, Pile & Burn Slash, Mow, Underburn	838
Lodgepole: Where stand growth and vigor have declined and stand structure and integrity are being affected by increasing mortality, a shelterwood or seed-tree harvest would be used.	F3	Seed Tree Harvest, Thin, Pile & Burn Slash	153
	V1	Seed Tree Harvest, Thin, Pile & Burn Slash and/or scarify	2,473
Lodgepole & Ponderosa: Small/medium tree thinning to allow continued development and management of established second growth stands.	V1, V2	Small/Medium Tree Thinning, Pile & Burn Piles	1,590
	V1, V2, F3	Small/medium Tree Thinning, Lop & Scatter Slash	2,238
		Total Treated Acres	16,034

Description of Activities

Small and medium size tree harvest is accomplished using ground based harvest equipment. Some small tree thinning may be accomplished by hand, using chainsaws. Excess slash material remaining within treatment units would be grapple piled or piled by hand and the piles burned on approximately 10,000 acres. In order to access activity areas, we will need to re-open previously closed roads and construct of temporary roads.

The objective mowing is to decrease the height of live or dead brush through the mastication (mowing) of brush in the stands. This is proposed on approximately 4,500 acres, with about 80% of each unit being mowed; up to 100% of safety corridor units would be mowed.

Underburning is proposed on approximately 4,500 acres following thinning and mowing activities. Roads and existing fireline would be used wherever possible. Up to 14,000 feet of new machine or hand line may need to be constructed. Upon completion of burning, fire lines would be rehabilitated by pulling slash and other materials back over the line to prevent use by motorized vehicles.

Where analysis indicates it is necessary, open system roads may be closed or decommissioned to meet other resources objectives including, but not limited to, wildlife habitat needs. Closed roads would remain available for future management needs. Decommissioned roads would be removed from the road system, would not be available for future management needs, and may be decommissioned by subsoiling or other methods.

This project will be designed to minimize or eliminate unwanted impacts by incorporating measures such as utilizing existing skid trails and landings, utilizing slash wherever possible, and restoring soil productivity through subsoiling where post-harvest conditions show a need.

Forest Plan Amendment

Underburning is proposed within Scenic Views foreground areas (primarily along Forest Roads 40, 42, and 45), to achieve visual quality objectives and improving resiliency over the long term. Standards and Guidelines from the Forest Plan current limit underburning in this allocation to generally 5 acres or less (S&G M9-90. LRMP page 4-131). An amendment to the Forest Plan is proposed in order to conduct underburning across areas greater than 5 acres.

How to Comment and Timeframe

I am inviting your comments on this proposal. Your comments will be considered and used to identify issues associated with the proposal, so please keep them as specific as possible. Your comments would be most useful if received on or before September 10, 2010.

Comments may be submitted electronically to comments-pacificnorthwest-deschutes-bend-ftrock@fs.fed.us. They must be submitted as part of the actual e-mail message, or as an attachment in Microsoft Word, rich text format (rtf), or portable document format (pdf) only. E-mails submitted to e-mail addresses other than the one listed above, in other formats than those listed, or containing viruses will be rejected. Please put "Junction Vegetation Management Project Scoping Comments" in the subject line of your email.

Comments may also be submitted in writing by mail or in person. Written comments should be sent or delivered to: Shane Jeffries, District Ranger, Bend-Fort Rock Ranger District, Red Oaks Square, 1230 NE 3rd Street, Suite A-262, Bend, Oregon 97701. Hand-delivered or oral comments must be provided at the Responsible Official's office via telephone (541) 383-4000 or in person at the same address during normal business hours: 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday, excluding holidays.

For additional information on this project, contact Christy McDevitt, team leader, at 541-383-4725 or e-mail cmcdevitt@fs.fed.us or John Davis, writer-editor, at 541-383-4714 or email jrdavis01@fs.fed.us.

Sincerely,

/s/ A. Shane Jeffries
A. SHANE JEFFRIES
District Ranger